Gray contributed greatly to our schools

By Barbara Rollins-Reed

"The best way to describe Fletcher was to say he had a great devotion to the Poquoson School System." This was an expressed opinion by both Assistant Superintendent George Curtis and middle school Principal Jack Wood as they discussed their long-time friendship and association with R. Fletcher Gray, who passed away Dec. 22, after a courageously fought battle against cancer.

Gray, originally from Gray's Mill, near Kinston, N.C., began his school career in this area as a classroom teacher in Newport News. He moved to the Hampton School System as an Assistant Principal.

He relocated to Poquoson in 1974 when he became principal of the high school. He remained in that position until 1977 when he assumed the position of assistant superintendent for instruction and served in that position until his retirement which was effective Dec. 1, 1983.

Growing with the school system, Gray assumed the responsibility for many programs and projects, including the much respected and widely admired staff orientation opportunities now being made available to Poquoson's teachers and administrators.

Instrumental in the development and implementation of the curriculum guides for public dissemination, Gray also guided and directed the development of the new curriculum for the Family Life program being planned for pilot testing in the spring and possible implementation into the 1984-85 school year.

One of his more self-rewarding accomplishments was the planning and implementation of the Regional Science Fair, held in Poquoson for the first time last year. Many critics told Poquoson it would be impossible for such a small school system to plan and implement such a tremendous undertaking, one that had presented problems to even larger school systems. Under the leadership and direction of Gray, the many volunteers working on the project did an excellent job and the science fair received regional recognition.

Gray established the Order of the Bull Pen while he was principal of the high school to recognize spirit and moral generated by patrons, staff and students who may otherwise go unrecognized for their accomplishments. Only 35 persons have received this prestigious recognition, and Gray, himself, was inducted into that order last year. "I believe that meant more to Fletcher than any other recognition," said Wood.

As Gray's career and accomplishments were discussed with his friends and associates, it soon became apparent that the love and affection given by him to others had not, nor will it ever, be forgotten. Many respected and admired this humorous and loving human being. His good humor and zest for life once again filled the room as each person remembered him in their own special way.

"Once Fletcher put his mind to doing something, he could not be told that it could not be done," said Wood. "He displayed a total spirit, drive and devotion to whatever he was doing, even in spite of a lot of gloom or doom."

Superintendent secretary Mary Jack Henley said "Even though Fletcher was a very learned person, anyone could talk with him and feel comfortable. He enjoyed sharing lighter moments and was sympathetic to others and their problems."

Clerk of board Colleen Dryden remembers the humorous side of Gray and his love of sweets. "I remember for his birthday last year," she said, "he told me I could bake him a cake, but leave out the cake and just serve him the icing. Fletcher was a humorous person, liked to make people laugh by telling jokes, and shared freely with his knowledge and advice."

"Fletcher helped many people see more than one side of a problem," said secretary Polly Brodsky, "giving a person the knack to see a situation from other points of view, which many times resulted in total insight into a more probable solution."

"I learned more under the leadership of Fletcher," said Special Education Coordinator Jeannette Wedding, "than anyone else in my career. He was a wonderful human being."

People always looked forward to an interview or an appointment with Gray because he had such a positive outlook in even the most depressing of times. The memory of Gray and his wonderful philosophies for a good life will remain etched in the minds of many people, this reporter included.

Fire department report

By Liz Mendez

The Fire Department responded to 58 fire and rescue calls during December.

Firefighters answered 23 calls which included one heat pump, seven chimney fires, one smoke odor, one auto fire, one faulty smoke alarm, two grease fires, one stove fire, two structural fires, one sewer pump station overheated, one gas spill, two burst water lines, and three false alarms.

The rescue squad responded to 35 calls which included five advanced life support (life-threatening), 21 basic life support (other emergencies), eight transportations and one no-transport.

Commission acts on three requests

By Liz Mendez

The Planning Commission met Tuesday night to hold public hearings on three issues.

A request by Frances and John Parker for a variance to the requirements of the subdivision ordinance in order to subdivide their property at 312 Wythe Creek Road was approved by the commission for recommendation to city council.

Robert F. Holloway requested a variance to the requirements of the subdivision ordinance in order to subdivide his property located at the southwest corner of Little Florida and Odd Roads. Holloway';s proposal to divide his two lots into three lots was approved and will be recommended to city council.

The commission considered an ordinance amending the zoning ordinance which would allow for the placement of mobile homes on private property abutting a mobile home park. The proposal was disapproved by the commission.

The commission scheduled a work session for Jan. 10, 7 p.m., to discuss the first draft of the completed Comprehensive Plan. Mark Mills of the State Department of Housing and Community Development will be present to answer questions about the plan.

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